

Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

Section X: The Early Cold War Diplomatic Terms & Historical Events

Diplomatic & Other Terms

Ambassador The official representative from one country to another. An Ambassador is the highest ranking official assigned to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. In the United States, an Ambassador is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The title of Ambassador was first used in the United States in 1893. Prior to that, the highest ranking American diplomats were Ministers Plenipotentiary.

Arbitration The formal process of dispute settlement by referring the matter to mediator agreed to by the disagreeing parties.

Attaché A recognized, but not uniform, title for members of a diplomatic mission. They may be either junior members of the diplomatic corps or specialist staff from outside of the traditional diplomatic establishment who often report to their home agencies.

Asylum: Protection given to a person who has left their home country, usually for political reasons, but not for criminal offenses.

Belligerent States Nations which are in a recognized state of war.

Blockade An official action designed to prevent people or goods from moving from one place to another. A war measure that isolates some area of importance to the enemy.

Charge d'Affaires The member of a diplomatic mission who takes charge of an embassy or legation during the temporary absence of its head. The chargé may also be the diplomat who acts as head of a country's lowest-level diplomatic mission that is neither an embassy nor a legation.

Charter The formal statement of an organized group that serves as its constitution or governing document.

Commission A group of representatives or diplomats who are given authority to accomplish a specific task.

Consul An official appointed by a government to protect its commercial interests and help its citizens in a foreign city.

Diplomacy The term is used to describe the practice of conducting relations with other nations, such as negotiating treaties, alliances, or agreements.

Diplomat An individual who is appointed by a government to represent its interests and to conduct its relations with another government. An Ambassador is the highest ranking U.S. Department of State diplomatic representative to another nation.

Diplomatic Corps Those engaged in on-going or specific official diplomatic efforts. Included are the Secretary of State, ambassadors, and special envoys to other nations and their staff members who support the work of diplomacy.

Diplomatic Mission An individual or group sent by a government to conduct negotiations or establish relations with another country. A diplomatic mission can be temporary or permanent.

Dispatches Official messages sent with speed between a government and its overseas diplomats or between nations.

Embargo An official ban by a government preventing trade with another country. An order of a state forbidding ships to enter or leave its ports.

Embassy The official headquarters of a government's Ambassador and other representatives to another country. It is usually located in the capitol of the other country. An Embassy is the highest level of diplomatic representation.

Envoy An agent sent by a government or ruler to transact diplomatic business.

Foreign Policy The official views and policies of a government regarding its relations with other nations. In the United States, foreign policy is developed by the President, with the advice of the Secretary of State and others, and is implemented by the Department of State and any other officials designated by the President.

Legation A diplomatic mission headed by a Minister whose title was "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary." A legation is the second level of diplomatic representation and is less important than an embassy.

Mandate: A policy especially prominent after World War I of governing territory freed from the control of a defeated state. The victors saw themselves as advanced states who would control territories for an indefinite time until they could "better" govern themselves.

Minister Plenipotentiary A diplomat with the authority to represent a head of state but of a lower status than an Ambassador. Until 1893, diplomats who headed American missions overseas only carried the title of Minister Plenipotentiary. The complete title is "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary."

Negotiate The term refers to discussions between individuals, groups, or nations that are conducted for the purpose of arriving at an agreement on a particular set of terms or actions.

Neutrality A legal status assumed unilaterally by a state during a time of war, indicating its intention to stay out of the war.

Nonintervention: The doctrine that intervention in the affairs of other nations is improper.

Protocol The system of rules and acceptable behavior used at official ceremonies and occasions. This may also refer to an official international agreement.

Ratify A state's formal act of consent to be bound by a treaty which it has already signed. In the United States, the Senate ratifies treaties negotiated by the Executive Branch.

Rebellion An attempt to remove a government or a leader by force.

Refugee A person who leaves his or her country to find safety, especially during war or for political or religious reasons.

Revolt An attempt to remove the government of a country by its some of its citizens, using force.

Sovereignty The authority of a state to govern itself.

Statesman An experienced politician, who is respected for making good decisions.

Treaty A formal agreement between two or more countries or states, as in reference to terms of peace or trade and any limitations associated within the agreement.

Trusteeship The idea that a territory should be administered for another state for an indefinite period of time until it is better able to govern itself.

Important Places, Concepts, and Events

Alignment: The practice of one nation adopting similar policies to that of another nation. Most often seen in political or economic affairs.

Appeasement: The act of satisfying the demands of an aggressive government or organization.

Atlantic Pact: Another term for the North Atlantic Treaty that brought NATO into existence.

Atomic Weapon: See "Nuclear Weapon."

Balfour Declaration of 1917: A letter from British Foreign Secretary Alfred Balfour that stated the British Government would support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine if that would not prejudice the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish population. The letter fell short of Zionist expectations.

Banana republic: A phrase that refers to a politically unstable country that is dependent on a single primary export ruled by a small, wealthy elite group.

Berlin Blockade (1948): One of the first crises of the Cold War when the Soviet Union cut off land access to the western sectors of the divided city of Berlin. In response, the Allies arranged an airlift that kept the city supplied for almost one year. It led to the creation of two separate German states.

CENTO: The Central Treaty Organization, a collective defensive pact originally constituted as the Baghdad Pact in 1955 by Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The United States joined its military committee in 1958.

Clandestine: A secret and often illegal action

Compulsory: Something that must, by law or rule, be done.

Containment: A policy of the United States and other countries to prevent an increase in Soviet influence after World War II.

Conventional Arms: Weapons that are in wide use and are not biological or nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

Coup/Coup d'Etat: An often violent action in which a group of people takes control of a nation by sudden, unexpected force.

Covert: Something done in a secret way.

Covert Operation: A secret or "deniable" intervention in the domestic politics or civil wars of other nations, often to overthrow a hostile government.

Cryptonym: A code name assigned to an operation or individual. It usually consists of a single word or short phrase and is designed to preserve secrecy.

Czechoslovakian Coup: An event in February 1948 during which Czech communists, with Soviet backing, seized control of the government. In its wake, the U.S. Congress approved the Marshall Plan.

Deterrent: To prevent or discourage a person or nation from pursuing a course of action.

Domino Theory: A theory of political behavior which argued that the loss of one country to communist domination would cause its neighbors to fall. This was most often applied to southeast Asia.

Eisenhower Doctrine: A policy articulated by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1957. It stated that a state could ask for assistance from the United States if it was being threatened with armed aggression from another state. The Eisenhower Doctrine was aimed primarily at the Soviet Union.

Fission Bomb: A type of nuclear weapon.

Formosa: An island off of the southwestern coast of China, now known as Taiwan. It has been the seat of the Chinese Nationalist government since 1949.

Fraternal: Friendly behavior like brothers toward each other; an equal status between nations.

House Un-American Activities Committee: An investigative committee of the U.S. House of Representatives that focused on investigating the alleged pro-communist activities of various Americans. Senator Joseph McCarthy had no involvement with this committee, but new Senator Richard M. Nixon gained prominence while investigating diplomat Alger Hiss.

Hydrogen Bomb: See "Thermonuclear Bomb."

International Whaling Commission: An international body set up in 1946 to conserve whale stocks and developing the whaling industry in an orderly manner.

Iron Curtain: A famous phrase of Winston Churchill's used to describe the control the Soviet Union exercised over its Eastern European satellite nations.

Isolationism: The political practice of noninvolvement in external affairs in favor of focusing exclusively on domestic matters.

Junta: A military government that has seized power by force.

Taiwan: An island located off the southwest coast of China and formerly known as Formosa. Chiang Kai-shek moved his Nationalist government here in 1949.

The Long Telegram: A report sent by diplomat George Kennan from the Embassy in Moscow discussing politics in the Soviet Union. Kennan's report was enormously influential in determining the foreign policy of the United States during the Cold War.

Marshall Plan: A program that provided large-scale American aid to Europe after World War II to help states rebuild their economies. The program was designed largely by diplomat George Kennan and named after Secretary of State George Marshall.

Military Industrial Complex: A phrase used by President Dwight Eisenhower in his 1961 farewell address to the nation. Eisenhower warned of its growing influence and the damage that might cause to American society.

Moratorium: The stopping of an activity for an agreed period of time.

Mr. X: The pseudonym used by George Kennan for an article he wrote for the journal, *Foreign Affairs* based on his Long Telegram.

National Security Council: An unit of the Executive Office that coordinates national security issues and provides policy advice to the President. It began operations during the Truman administration.

Nonintervention: The doctrine that intervention in the affairs of other nations is improper.

NATO: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, founded in 1949 with 12 founding members. NATO is a system of collective defense. It was activated for the first time after terrorists struck the United States on September 11, 2001.

Nuclear Weapons: An explosive device that gets its destructive force from nuclear reactions.

Organization of American States: An international organization consisting of 35 Western Hemisphere states. Its headquarters is in Washington, D.C.

Paramilitary: A group organized like an army but not a part of a traditional army

Paternal: Behavior like that of a father toward a child; often refers to the behavior of a powerful nation toward a weaker one.

Political Purges: The practice of ridding one's country or party of undesirables or enemies

Pseudonym: A name used instead of a person's real name during a covert operation.

Psywar: A shortened version of "psychological warfare" designed to attack or influence a nation's beliefs, emotion, or behavior.

Quorum: The number of members who must be present at a meeting for its decisions to become official.

Rearmament: The process of supplying itself with new weapons to become a stronger power.

Reciprocal: Operating for both parties to a similar degree.

Satellite States: A nation which is always subservient to another in important policy areas. During the Cold War the term was usually applied to the nations of Eastern Europe

SEATO: The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was a collective defensive organization, established in 1955. Its members included Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan (including East Pakistan, now Bangladesh), the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Social Justice: The idea of creating a society based on the principle of equality and human rights.

Solidarity: Agreement between and support for members of a group

Superpower: A power of the first rank in terms of reputation and economic and military power. Superpowers generally dominate international organizations and assume special rights and obligations.

Taiwan: An island located off the southwest coast of China and formerly known as Formosa. Chiang Kai-shek moved his Nationalist government here in 1949.

Thermonuclear Bomb: A powerful and deadly weapon which operates through hydrogen fusion. The United States first tested the concept in 1952

and the Soviet Union developed its own device in 1955.

Tribunal: A special court chosen usually by governments to examine a particular problem.

Truman Doctrine: The 1947 policy of President Harry S Truman which stated that the United States would provide aid to Greece and Turkey to prevent them from falling under Soviet control.

United Fruit Company: An American corporation involved in the international fruit trade. United Fruit had extensive holdings in Latin America. The appropriation of some of its Guatemalan land holdings led to charges that it was involved in the overthrow of the Arbenz government.